

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PALERMO'S MAYOR SCOMA

1. BACKGROUND/BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: CARMELO SCOMA, 44 YEARS OLD, WAS ELECTED MAYOR OF PALERMO ON JANUARY 3, 1976. A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT, SCOMA IS A FOLLOWER OF DC REGIONAL SECRETARY NICOLETTI. SCOMA PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED A SOLID REPUTATION AND SUBSTANTIAL PERSONAL FOLLOWING DURING A FIVE-YEAR TENURE AS CITY ASSESSOR FOR PARKS. HE PRESIDES OVER A DC-PSI-PSDI-PRI GIUNTA IN OPEN "DIALOGUE" WITH THE LOCAL PCI. THE PSI'S ENTRY INTO THE GIUNTA IS THE SECOND NOVELTY OF SCOMA'S ADMINISTRATION. AS THE SOCIALISTS MOVED IN, HOWEVER, THOSE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS LOYAL TO GIOVANNI GIOIA AND THEREFORE OPPOSED TO DIALOGUE WITH THE PCI REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN SCOMA'S ADMINISTRATION. END NOTE.
2. IN A COURTESY CALL CONVERSATION ON AUGUST 27, IT WAS CLEAR THAT SCOMA SAW THE FANFANIANI (12 OF THE DC'S 36 CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS) AS THE ENEMY AND NOT THE COMMUNISTS WHOM HE CONSIDERED REALISTIC AND COOPERATIVE-REPRESENTATIVE OF A NEW PHASE IN ITALIAN POLITICS. AS THE AUTUMN POLITICAL SEASON BEGINS, THEREFORE, SCOMA SEES EITHER A POSSIBLE SHOWDOWN BETWEEN THE REST OF THE PARTY AND THE FANFANIANI OR THEIR BEING COOPTED INTO THE GIUNTA. EITHER WAY, A RESHUFFLE IS TO BE EXPECTED.
3. SCOMA WOULD NOT RESIST BEING DISPLACED AS MAYOR SINCE THE BURDENS ARE GREATER THAN THE PRESTIGE. MOST ONEROUS IS THE CITY'S FINANCIAL CONDITION, I.E.:

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-- REAL ANNUAL REVENUE THIS YEAR IS LESS THAN 25 BILLION LIRE

(1 BILLION CA. US DOLLARS 1.2 MILLION).

-- THE TREASURY MINISTRY HAS UNDERWRITTEN A SPECIAL LOAN TO THE CITY OF 127 BILLION LIRE, BUT

-- THE CITY NEEDS 300 BILLION LIRE, AND ANOTHER 100 BILLION TO RE-ORGANIZE BANKRUPT CITY-OWNED SERVICE COMPANIES.

4. THE CITY GOVERNMENT HAS REGISTERED SOME SUCCESS, HOWEVER, IN FINDING BETTER HOUSING FOR SOME 400 SLUM FAMILIES. MANY MORE ARE NEEDED, BUT LANDLORDS ARE RELUCTANT TO RENT EMPTY DWELLINGS TO THE CITY FOR THIS PURPOSE. ALTERNATIVE HOUSING MUST BE FOUND, HOWEVER, IF SLUM CLEARANCE PROJECTS ARE TO GO FORWARD. SIXTY-FIVE BILLION LIRE HAS BEEN EARMARKED FOR SUCH PROJECTS AND GIVEN PALERMO'S RECORD FOR HONESTY IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND ITS NEED FOR ECONOMIC PUMP-PRIMING THE COMPETITION FOR THESE FUNDS SHOULD AT THE LEAST BE FIERCE.

5. COMMENT: WITH 36 OUT OF 80 CITY COUNCILORS (THE PCI HAS 15 AND THE PSI 8), THE DC COULD MAKE ALMOST ANY KIND OF MAJORITY WORK IF THE PARTY WERE UNITED. BUT WARFARE WITHIN THE PARTY IS SO RELENTLESS AND BITTER THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NOW BECOME ACCEPTABLE AS A MAKE-WEIGHT IN THE POLITICAL BALANCE. THE DC "DIKE" AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS HAS THUS BECOME A VERY POROUS MEMBRANE INDEED. COLLINS.

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